



Helping Youth Discern God's Call by Brian William

Two months ago, a group from my church attended the Leadership Institute held at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. Pastor Adam Hamilton spoke of his desire to encourage young people to pursue the possibility of ordained ministry and how the church was planning a small group to accomplish this. He then asked all those attending the Institute to turn to the person next to them and name some young people in their churches whom God may be calling into ordained ministry. The youth ministry director from my church was present. She turned and said, "I can think of three names." I responded, "I, too, can think of three names!" It turned out that we were thinking of two names in common, and each of us suggested one person the other had not considered, bringing our total to four.

I have now begun the process of reaching out to churches in my area to see if they might have one or two young people each, with the hope that we could have a total of ten young people to form an ongoing small group. I'm hoping this group would:

1. Engage in biblical study and theological discussion at a deeper level than the typical youth group meeting or confirmation session. In addition to the basics of the Christian faith, it could look specifically at what types of spiritual gifts or characteristics God gives to people who are called into ministry.
2. Offer an opportunity for the participants to exhibit leadership skills within the church. These would not be menial tasks that we sometimes give youth (folding bulletins and lighting candles), but having them help lead worship, assist with sermon preparation, accompany the pastor on a hospital visitation, develop a Bible study lesson plan, etc.

An added benefit of this program is that it permits youth with similar interests and commitments to find a community of theological and vocational discernment not available in any one congregation.

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